

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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San Ildefonso Pueblo

With this number of our diary, we will close our series of stories on a most enjoyable trip by motor car from Monterey to the Southeast coast of the United States and the return trip across the continent.

We have reported to you on all the historical places and shrines which we have visited, the restorations which we have observed and studied and the beauties of nature which we have admired.

We greatly appreciate the privileges which we have enjoyed and the knowledge we have gained through seeing much of the history of the nation as it appears in the public buildings and homes of the people who made that history for this great country in the South. One cannot enjoy these sights without becoming a better American through such an experience.

We cannot close without another story of the Southwest - the Indian country around Santa Fe and Taos. As we motored along the beautiful highway from Taos back to Santa Fe, we were lured by a roadside historical marker and a highway directional sign, to turn and proceed to San Ildefonso pueblo where is the home of Maria Martinez, celebrated potter and creator of the beautiful black pottery acclaimed by artists.

Although the pueblo at Ildefonso resembled Taos pueblo, we were told the Indians there speak the Tewa language while those at Taos speak the Tiwa language, and that Jemez is the only pueblo where Towa is now used. These three are related tongues that derive from a common family, but now a resident of one pueblo has difficulty in understanding the Indians from another pueblo.

As we drove into the San Ildefonso pueblo we were impressed by the quietness and the cleanliness of the place. We saw just two men standing silently in the sun, leaning against an adobe wall. In the near foreground we observed a small Indian blanket hanging near the doorway of one of the small adobe buildings and to this almost obvious sign of business, we went. There we were greeted by a handsome young Indian, dressed as any American college student might be dressed, in the best of taste, neat as a pin, and the possessor of a charming personality. The interior of the small shop belied its plain exterior and lack of any advertising

whatever. The display of jewelry, baskets, pottery, and art was the most outstanding we had seen anywhere.

We stayed and visited, made a few purchases, asked many questions and finally obtained a confession from Popovi Da, who is an artist in his own right, that he is the son of Maria Martinez, the famous artist of San Ildefonso. Since the death of his father, Julian Martinez, he has designed the artwork on the pottery made by his mother. Both Popovi and Maria sign each piece they make.

It is known that polychrome ware was made at San Ildefonso in 1875. The plain black was made there as early as 1875. In 1908, while excavating in a cave in the Rito de los Fraioles, archaeologists of the School of American Research uncovered some prepared pottery clay which had never been fashioned into vessels by the prehistoric artisans, we learned in reading a pocket handbook concerning the New Mexico Indians. This material was given to Maria and Julian Martinez, who made several pieces art pottery from it, decorating the specimens and firing them according to the procedure of that period. The results were very satisfactory. This, and encouragement given Maria (Po-vi-ka) by members of the School of American Research staff, appears to have stimulated her and other Tewa artisans to produce wares of increasing quality and quantity.

In 1954, the French government presented the much coveted "Palms Academiques" to two pueblo pottery makers, Maria Martinez, San Ildefonso, and Sevrera Tafoya, Santa Clara. We saw this award as well as dozens of blue ribbons and other decorations which have been received by Maria, by her late husband and by their son. Popovi Da.

When we visited the Indian museum in Santa Fe, we saw many more examples of their pottery making and also a number of pieces of Sevrera Tafoya's artistic work.